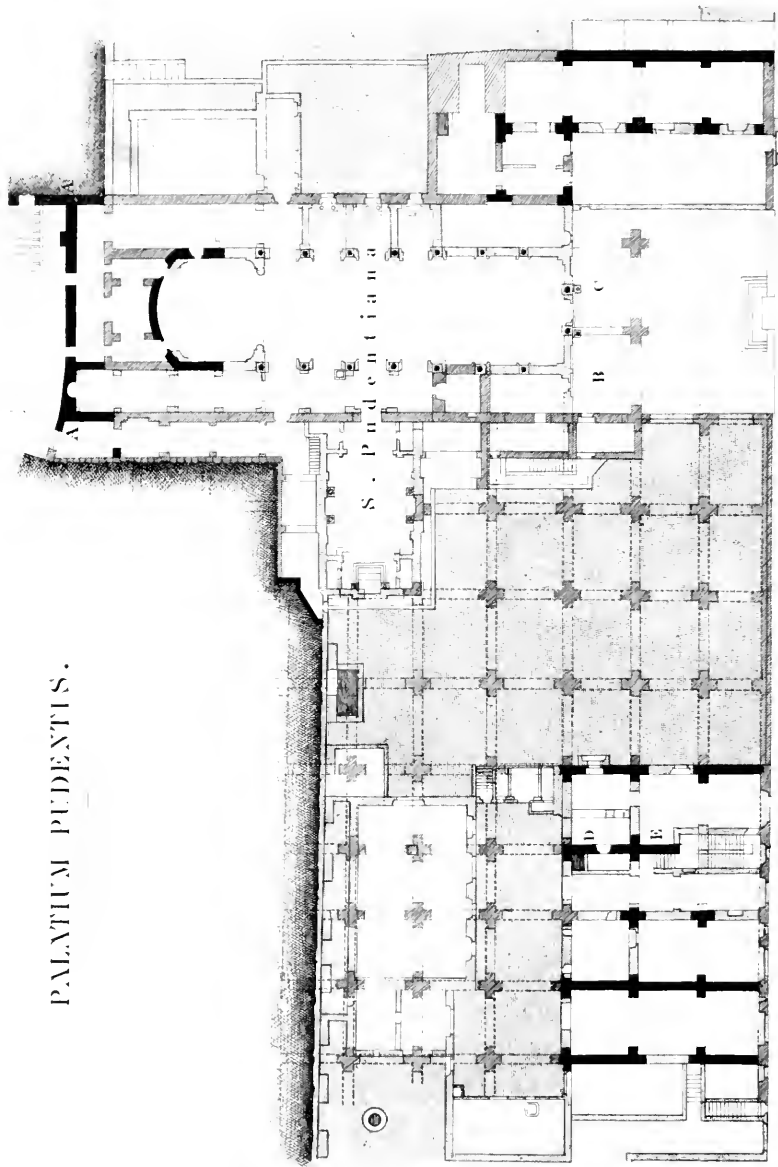




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THE HOUSE OF PUDENS IN ROME.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED TO THE ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE,
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/

BY

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THE HOUSE OF PUDENS IN ROME.

By J. H. PARKER, F.S.A.

It is well known that the early history of the Bishops of Rome, afterwards called popes, is very obscure and of doubtful authenticity. The earliest historian is Damasus, who lived in the latter part of the fourth century, and must have relied on tradition for the history of the three previous centuries. He states that Pius I., who was bishop from 154 to 162, "made a church in the thermæ of Novatus, and dedicated it in honour of his sister Pudentiana, the martyr." The authenticity of this statement, which is printed in Anastasius, is disputed by Protestant historians, and warmly contended for by Roman Catholics. Pius I. is said to have been a brother of the Pastor of Hermas, who wrote the celebrated treatise called his Visions, the genuineness of which is also a matter of dispute. If the Roman Catholic historians can be accepted, Pius *was* the brother of this Pastor of Hermas, and the grandson of Pudens, the Roman senator, and the friend of St. Paul. The coincidences are very great respecting the family of Pudens as being among the earliest Christians, and the most important family of Christians in Rome. The legends of the Greek Church and those of the ancient British Church, now called the Welsh, agree substantially with the Roman legends respecting this family. The connection of Pudens with the British royal family, and his marriage with Gladys, the daughter or niece of Caractacus, is a staunch matter of belief in Wales. These legends have been collected by a Welsh clergyman of the name of Morgan,¹ now an arch-deacon. Some of the leading facts are confirmed by Tacitus,² and by Martial in his epigrams.³

Another incidental confirmation of the connection of the

¹ Morgan's *St. Paul in Britain*, 12mo. Oxford, 1861, p. 114 to 129.

² *Annals of Tacitus*, book xii. c. 33 to 38.

³ *Martialis Epigram.* lib. i. 32; lib. iv. 13:—

AD RUFUM DE NUPTIIS PUDENTIS ET
CLAUDIE PEREGRINÆ.

Ibid. lib. iv. 29, "AD PUDENTEM;" lib. v. 48; lib. vi. 58; lib. vii. 97:—

"DE CLAUDIA RUFINA.

"Claudia cœruleis cum sit Rufina Britannis

Edita, quam Latine pectore plebis habet!
Quale decus formæ," &c. (*Lib. xi. 53.*)

family of Pudens with Britain is afforded by the well-known inscription found at Chichester, and preserved in the park of Goodwood, near to that city. This inscription records the grant of land for building a temple by Pudens, in his capacity of governor of the southern province of Britain.

It is now generally acknowledged that the Acts of the Martyrs and the Roman Martyrology were compiled in the eighth or ninth century, and are in themselves of no historical authority. They are compiled from various sources of very different authenticity; but the Acts of Justin Martyr have generally been allowed to be genuine, and in these we have strong testimony in favour of the history of the house of Pudens. When S. Justin is being examined by the Prefect, he is asked "in what place the Christians were accustomed to assemble in Rome?" At first he evades the question, saying that they do not all assemble at the same place; but, as the Prefect presses the question again as to where he himself has resided in Rome, he replies, in the house of a certain Martin, in the baths of Timotheus,⁴ which is another name for the baths or *thermæ* of Novatus, made in the house of Pudens. Timotheus was another member of the same family. According to the traditions of the Roman Church, this senator's large family palace, in a part of which hot-air baths, called by the Greek name of *thermæ*, had been made, and afterwards abandoned, was the usual abode of all foreign Christians coming to Rome, a sort of gratuitous hostel open to all fellow-Christians coming with proper certificates.

The archæological evidence is strongly in favour of the truth of these traditions; the existing remains of some great palace of the first century, with alterations of the second, are very distinct. It was built against the southern cliff of the Viminal Hill. The cellars under the houses in the Via di S. Pudentiana (originally called the Vicus Patricius) consist of a series of long, narrow, vaulted chambers, the arches of which are built of the fine brick-work of the first century, several of which are supported by other arches under them, and these lower arches are of the character of the second century. The subterranean church is formed out of three of these long, narrow, vaulted chambers, with arches pierced

⁴ S. P. N. Justin, *Philosophi et Martyris Opera*, editio Benedictina. Paris, 1742, folio, p. 586. It may be added

that in the same examination of the Martyrs, Rusticus says he is a servant of Cæsar, but a believer in Christ.

through the walls, and with clerestory windows made over them. These windows must have opened into an area, and so were just below the level of the ground, and therefore out of sight. The whole arrangement was admirably calculated to avoid observation in times of persecution, but the persecutions usually lasted a few months only ; at other times the Christians were treated in the same manner as other citizens, and were governed by the same laws. They could and did assemble in each other's houses in ordinary times ; and as their numbers increased, the usual place of assembly became the basilica, or great hall, the largest room in the house. This was evidently the case in the house of Pudens, as the present church of S. Pudentiana stands in the original hall of the palace, and the outer wall of it can be seen behind the altar, with the large hall windows in it of the first century, filled up with brick-work of the second, so nearly resembling the original construction that it is not easy at once to distinguish them. The original construction of the wall and of the arches of the hall windows agrees perfectly with that of the arches in the cellars and in the subterranean church.

According to the Roman traditions, the *thermæ* of Novatus had been abandoned, and were not in use when the church was made. There is a remarkable confirmation of this in the remains of the crypt : in the angles of the subterranean chambers we find hot-air flues *cut in the wall* of the first century, which must have been done before the arches were pierced to make the church, and could not have been then in use. After the arches were made they could not have used it as a sweating-bath, what we now call a Turkish or Russian bath, which corresponds exactly with the *thermæ* of ancient Rome ; and these *thermæ* of Novatus must have been out of use when the arches were pierced, which appears to have been in the second century, to judge by the construction of the brick arches, and so agreeing with the tradition. One objection made to the genuineness of the dedication by Pius I. is that when the first Roman synod was held at the end of the fifth century, in the year 499, Asterius Justinus, the priest who attended the synod, is called "*Presbyter Tituli Pudentis.*" This appears to me rather to confirm the tradition that this church was made in the house of Pudens, and was called indifferently either by

that general name, or by that of different members of the family.

Pompeius Ugonius, who was living in the sixteenth century, at the time that this church was rebuilt by the Gaetani, was a friend of that great family, and an eye-witness and careful observer of what was seen in his time, of which he has left us a record in his book on the "Stations of Rome :"⁵ his testimony is therefore very important. He states that on one of the capitals was an inscription recording that Valerius Messala, prefect of the city, had caused some building (the name of which was unfortunately obliterated) in the Vicus Patricius to be made and adorned in a splendid manner for the public.⁶ He also saw a marble sarcophagus in the courtyard with the inscription :—LEOPARDO ET MAXIMO. These are said by Panvinus to have been cardinal priests under Innocent I. (A.D. 402—407). Leopardus is mentioned by Anastasius,⁷ as rebuilding the church of St. Agnes. On the wall behind the high altar was another marble slab with the inscription :—ETILICIO · LEOPARDO · ET · MAXIMO, but Ugonius thinks that this slab may have been moved from another place. Over the altar in the side chapel, where the wooden slab or table is preserved, on which S. Peter is said to have celebrated the Eucharist, was another inscription in Mosaic letters,—MAXIMVS · FECIT · CVM · SVIS. This altar is the one at the end of the north aisle, which was rebuilt by Cardinal Wiseman. It will be seen by the ground plan of the church that this aisle, with the chapel at the end of it, projects considerably beyond the line of the high altar, and extends to the outer wall, whereas the high altar is brought considerably within it, and has a chamber or sacristy behind it. The apse of the choir, with the present fine mosaic picture upon it, therefore stands quite detached from the outer wall, and considerably within it. The Mosaic inscription over the side altar could therefore have nothing to do with the mosaic picture over the high altar, but on the contrary evidently belongs to a different period. On the wall that separates the chapel from the choir and the high altar is a marble slab, with the name SIRICIVS EPISCOPVS. It has the appearance of having

⁵ "Historia delle Stationi di Roma che si celebrano la Quadregesima, di Pompeo Ugonio."—Roma, 1528, 12mo.

⁶ " . . . S VAL MESSALA V. C. PRAEFICIVS VRBI . . . SPLENDOREM PVBLICVM

IN VICO PATRICIO VICTORIAE ET FIERI ET ORNARI PROCVRABIT."—Ugonii Stationi, p. 161.

⁷ " . . . laborantibus presbyteris Cucicino, et Leopardo, et diacono Liby-

been built in when the wall was rebuilt; but being in the lower part of the wall, it may be in its original place, the upper part of the wall only being rebuilt. The low wall with the inscription upon it is stated by Ugonius to have been part of the marble screen to enclose the choir, erected in the time of Innocent III. (A.D. 1198—1216), by Cardinal Sasso, as recorded by another inscription. Old marble was no doubt used for the purpose. The character of the letters of the name of Siricius agrees with the fourth century. It appears probable that the heads in panels of shallow sculpture built in as a lintel over the doorway in the sixteenth century, were originally part of this screen to enclose the choir, in which were also the ambones; but this does not decide the date, as they might also be old marble. Siricius was bishop from 385 to 397, and there were only five years between him and Innocent I.: it is therefore probable that the church was rebuilding during these two episcopates, and that the old hall or basilica was then pulled down, excepting the end wall behind the altar.

The church was entirely rebuilt under Hadrian I. (A.D. 772—795), as recorded by Anastasius,⁸ who says that the church was then in ruins. His exact words here are important: he calls it the “Titulus of Pudens,” that is, the church of St. Pudentiana.

Leo III.⁹ (A.D. 795—816) is recorded by Anastasius to have given a white silk vestment to this church, and may have done more; the sculpture of the heads may be of his time, the rebuilding being only then completed.

In one of the side chapels of the lower church there is a painting of the eighth century, which is published in Perret’s work on the Catacombs. It represents the Madonna between S. Pudentiana and S. Praxedes. This painting I once saw about five years since, by descending on a ladder through the opening in the pavement of a side chapel in the upper church into the chapel of the crypt, this was then being converted into a family burial vault; as bodies have since been buried in it, it is now impossible to descend into it. The arch from this chapel to the aisle of the lower church was walled up at that time.

ano.” (Anastasius, xlii. s. INNOCENTIIUS, 57.)

⁸ “. . . titulum Pudentis, id est ecclesiam Sanctæ Potentianæ (Pudentianæ) in

ruinis positam noviter reparavit.” (Anastasius, xcvii. 343.)

⁹ Anastasius, xcvi. 425.

Another battle-ground in this church is the mosaic picture in the apse, one of the finest mosaic pictures in Rome, respecting the date of which there is the greatest difference of opinion among the learned. The Roman school contend that it is of the fourth century, when the upper church was rebuilt. The church was again partially rebuilt in the eleventh century, as indicated by an inscription on the wall of the north aisle, which gives a date to that wall. The last general rebuilding was made at the expense of the Gaetani family in the sixteenth century, as we now see it, and at that time the nave was shortened considerably; the square court between the present front and the street having formerly been part of this church, with some of the subterranean chambers of the house of Pudens under it. The new front, now being rebuilt by Cardinal Bonaparte, is only on the site of the one built by the Gaetani, still leaving the old doorway with the shallow sculpture over it, which may have been of the eighth century, or possibly of the twelfth. This kind of shallow sculpture is usually of the eighth or ninth; but in Rome old fashions lingered long, and the Latin verses round the heads of the family of Pudens are very much like those common in the twelfth century.

Ugonius states that he found among the fragments of the mosaics on the ground the monogram of HADRIANVS, which he called *Tertius*, without any authority, as he gives a woodcut of the monogram, in which no indication of the number occurs. This appears to be strong evidence that this mosaic picture was made when the church was rebuilt, about 780. He also found other letters forming part of the name of Hadrianus as belonging to another inscription.

A great deal has been said about the antique character of this mosaic picture, which is called the finest in Rome; but I cannot myself see the *antique* character. It cannot be earlier than the end of the fourth century, when the church was built on the site of the old basilica, making use of the old crypt and outer wall only. Of that period we have no mosaics in the least resembling it; and the remarkable mosaics in S. Maria Maggiore, which belong to the early part of the fifth century, or not many years after this, are of quite a different style of work and of drawing. Those are also entirely composed of scriptural subjects, whereas these have two figures of saints—Pudentiana and Praxedes,—and

the emblems of the Evangelists in the clouds. It is true that these are represented in a peculiar manner, unlike any others in Rome ; but the style of workmanship and of drawing does not agree with the mosaics in S. Constantia, a few years earlier, or those in S. Maria Maggiore, a few years later, and agrees much more nearly with those in the sister church of S. Prassede a few years after the time of Hadrian I. The difference is about thirty years, which may be sufficient to account for the variation between them in the mosaic.

It is true, also, that there is a remarkable resemblance between the buildings in the back-ground of the picture under the emblems of the Evangelists, and those represented on a sarcophagus of the fourth century, now in the Lateran Museum, both being separate buildings, with circular domed roofs, and doorways with gratings over them, similar to the door of the Pantheon, evidently an old Roman custom. Each of the Apostles sits in front of a door of this kind, in evident allusion to the book of Revelation (Ch. xxi.). This resemblance in design and execution can hardly be accidental ; but there is no improbability in supposing that this very sarcophagus might have been used as a model by the mosaicist centuries afterwards. This seems more probable than that the mosaic should be unlike any other of the period. The central figure of Christ, with the label, having the inscription *Dominus Conservator Ecclesie Pudentiane*, is an evident *restoration* of the sixteenth century. The mosaic has been much repaired and *restored* in many parts and at different times.

There appears to be strong evidence that this fine mosaic picture was one of the earliest works of the *Schola Græca* in Rome, the colony of Byzantine Greek artists who took refuge in Rome from the Iconoclasts about that time, and had a dwelling assigned to them at the church of S. Maria in Cosmedin, so called from the rich decorations of these artists. In the time of Ugonius, the mosaic over the side altar, with the inscription, was still in existence ; it has since been destroyed. The outer side-wall of that chapel was rebuilt in the time of Gregory VII., A.D. 1073—1085, by Cardinal Benedictus, as recorded by an inscription. The exterior of this wall is an excellent example of that peculiar mode of construction called *herring-bone* work, which was very frequently used in the eleventh century. The present

church, with its low vaulted nave, with the columns cased in square brick pillars, and with all the characteristics of the ugliest of debased periods, is entirely the work of the Gaetani family, and was much admired in its time. The very elegant campanile belongs to the end of the twelfth century, the time of Innocent III., A.D. 1198—1216. The chapel of the Gaetani is on the left hand in entering the nave, and is very handsome in its details, with really fine sculpture and mosaic pictures of the modern school; one of these (over the door) represents the saints Pudentiana and Praxedes collecting the blood of the martyrs according to the legends, and employing *sponges* for that purpose.

The relics of three thousand saints are said to be buried in this church. Of course this means only that such relics were brought from the catacombs when the church was rebuilt in the eighth century; but it is absurdly misrepresented, and ignorant people are taught that they were all thrown down the well, with a grating of the thirteenth century over it, on the left hand side of the nave, and a light is let down to show the bones at the bottom, which are renewed from time to time.

It has been said that the house or palace of the Pudens family was built up against the cliff of the Viminal Hill, on the southern side; the Vicus Patricius of the time of the Republic and the Empire was made in the great fosse or trench in the valley under that cliff, and that the street now called the Via di S. Pudentiana is in the same line though at a higher level. On the opposite side of the Viminal Hill, built against the northern cliff, are remains of another street of the same kind, in the same line that a new street is now being made. Against the upper part of the cliff are remains of towers with tufa walls of the time of the kings, belonging to the original Arx of the Viminal, and concrete walls of a house of the time of the Republic; and on the sloping banks are remains of the *lavacrum* of Agrippina, of the time of Augustus, which was identified by an inscription found on the walls. There are still some interesting remains of mosaic pavements and painted chambers of the first century, and the aqueduct to supply the baths or washing places. This is ingeniously contrived in such a manner that one tunnel served for both purposes, there being a small channel for pure water let into the upper part of a drain.

The same convenient arrangement may be seen in the Cloaca Maxima, near St. Georgio in Velabro.

These interesting remains on the northern slope of the Viminal have been made more visible by the excavations of the Archæological Society in 1871.

REFERENCES TO THE GROUND PLAN.

A A Brick wall of the first century, with Hall Windows filled up in the second.

B C Chambers with decoration of the first century, excavated in 1870, formerly under the nave of the church, now in the court-yard between the present front and the street.

D E Chambers of the first century, with alterations of the second, now cellars.

